

Information for
Astronomy and Astrophysics
Postdoctoral Fellows

National Science Foundation
Division of Astronomical Sciences

IMPORTANT

This booklet outlines the terms and conditions of your National Science Foundation Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowship (AAPF) and provides general information for use during your tenure. Read it carefully and refer to it whenever you have a question about your Fellowship. If you lose this booklet, we will send you another upon request.

Address all correspondence to:

Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowships
Division of Astronomical Sciences
National Science Foundation
Room 1045
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22230

You may also contact the program via e-mail at: aapf@nsf.gov. The telephone number for the Division of Astronomical Sciences is (703) 292-8820 and the FAX number is (703) 292-9034.

As a recipient of NSF funds, you are responsible for fulfilling the academic and fiscal obligations of your award.

Failure on the part of a Fellow to observe all the terms and conditions of a Fellowship award constitutes sufficient grounds for its revocation by the Foundation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Your National Science Foundation Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowship has been awarded by the National Science Foundation in recognition of your accomplishments to date, and with the hope that the experience you will obtain during the tenure of your Fellowship will enhance your development as a scientist and educator and contribute to the scientific and educational effort of the United States. Upon acceptance of an award under this program, the Foundation will issue a letter based on the information submitted in your Fellowship application.

2. FELLOWSHIP INSTITUTION

A Fellow must, by law, affiliate with an appropriate **United States** institution as described in the Program Announcement for the Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Research Fellowships during the entire Fellowship tenure, and is responsible for making all arrangements for such affiliation with the Fellowship Institution. A clear relationship should be established with the chosen institution before beginning tenure, thus assuring both the Fellow and the Foundation that it will be possible to carry out the program for which the Fellowship was awarded.

If it becomes necessary or desirable to seek affiliation with an institution other than the one listed in the application, the Fellow must request **in writing** permission from the Foundation, stating the reasons for the proposed change and explaining the appropriateness of the new institution for the proposed plan for research and education. **(See Section 5 of this document for more details.)** This must be done **before** final arrangements with the new institution are completed. A fellow may not enter on tenure until the Foundation approves all changes, including the new sponsoring scientist.

Before you enter on tenure at an institution where you presently hold a full-time position or appointment, the Foundation must receive a letter from an appropriate official stating that you will be relieved of all prior institutional duties during the tenure of the Fellowship.

3. SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR

Each Postdoctoral Fellow will arrange for a staff member at the Fellowship Institution to serve as sponsoring senior scientist. Usually this individual will be a professor or staff scientist with whom you will be working closely in your Fellowship program. It is hoped that this advisor will assist in the planning and initiation of your program of study and research, and will advise you from time to time. The scientific advisor will be the institutional representative responsible for your activities during tenure.

Starting and Termination Certificates used in connection with the Fellowship should be signed by this scientific advisor, or if absent, by an appropriate official of the institution.

Any questions relating to your status at the Fellowship Institution which the scientific advisor cannot answer should be referred for resolution to other appropriate officials within the Fellowship Institution, such as a department chair, Dean of the Graduate school, or a designated institutional representative.

4. ENTRANCE UPON TENURE

A Postdoctoral Fellow must begin Fellowship activities by October 1 of the year in which the award is made. An awardee who is unable to begin tenure within this specified time period is expected to decline the Fellowship. This declination will not prejudice any future application.

Before a Fellow may enter upon tenure of a Postdoctoral Fellowship, the Foundation must have on record the date on which the Ph.D. was received. If the Ph.D. is not received prior to the starting date of tenure, an awardee, before beginning Fellowship tenure, must submit evidence that all the requirements for the degree have been completed. A certification form for this purpose is enclosed with the mailing of your award letter.

A set of starting materials, including a Fellowship Starting Certificate, NSF Form 349 (2-97), will be sent to you with the mailing of your award letter. This form must be completed and returned to NSF before any Fellowship funds can be received.

Fellowship tenure starts on the date a Fellow begins Fellowship activities and terminates on the date Fellowship activities are completed at the Fellowship Institution, as indicated on the Starting and Termination Certificates, both of which must be signed by the sponsoring senior scientist or by an appropriate official of the institution. This is a requirement which the Foundation must ask Fellows to fulfill in order to comply with governmental accounting regulations. If a Fellow interrupts tenure or affiliates with more than one institution, Starting and Termination Certificates are required **for each portion of tenure. Stipend payments (with the exception described in section 6c below) will not be authorized until a Starting Certificate has been received by the Foundation.**

5. PROGRAM CHANGES

Any major change in the program of research or education from that proposed at the time of application, and any change in tenure, or in the institution(s) with which a Fellow is associated, must receive the **prior** approval of the National Science Foundation. Before completion of the first year of Fellowship tenure, changes in the Fellowship Institution will be approved only under unusual circumstances. Since the likely impact of both the sponsoring scientist and the Fellowship Institution on the professional development of the Fellow was an important factor in the proposal evaluation process, the selection of these, especially for the first year of Fellowship tenure, will normally be viewed as a commitment on the part of the applicant to fulfill the plan for research and education as outlined in the original application. Although it is expected that each Fellow will carry out the program as approved at the time of application, **minor** changes may be made at the discretion of the Fellow and with concurrence by the scientific advisor. However, any **major** changes must be outlined and justified in full in writing so that a determination may be made by the Foundation as to whether the new program falls within the intent of the award.

6. STIPENDS

a. Amount. The stipend will be paid at a monthly rate which totals \$50,000 for each calendar year of the 3-year fellowship.

b. Payments. Stipend payments will be authorized after a properly completed Fellowship Starting Certificate, NSF Form 349 (2-97), and a completed ACH Vendor Enrollment Form SF-3881 have been received by the Foundation. Payments will be made in monthly installments during the tenure of the Fellowship, according to the schedule of payments submitted and approved by the Foundation (Fellowship Payment Schedule, NSF Form 1367 (3-98)). Stipends will be paid using the Vendor Express Payment System, which involves electronic transfer of the stipend payments to the Fellow's bank account via the Federal Reserve System. Transferring funds electronically requires the Fellow's bank ABA number and his/her bank account number. The ABA number is a 9 digit number assigned to each bank by the American Banker's Association. To provide this information, Fellows should complete Form SF-3881 and return it to the Foundation together with the Starting Certificate. The first stipend will be paid as soon as possible after the completed forms are received by the Foundation. Although every effort will be made to process the first payment immediately upon receipt of the Starting Certificate and Form SF-3881, it may not be received until five to seven weeks after the start of the Fellowship tenure. It will therefore be necessary for the Fellow to make full financial provision for this interim period. Fellows are encouraged to make arrangements for

accounts prior to the start of their fellowship tenure, so that initial processing may proceed without delay. In addition, **Fellows are requested to use the same account for the entire period of their fellowship tenure, as any changes may involve significant delays in the processing of stipends.**

Any changes or interruptions in stipend payment, or any other miscellaneous actions should be requested and described on the Fellowship Action Form, NSF Form 383 (2/97), also sent with the starting materials.

c. Initial Stipend Advance. Because Starting Certificates are not to be submitted until after tenure begins, Fellows may request payment of the first month's stipend in advance, in order to receive assistance during the processing period. A form to request this advance, Request for Stipend Advance, NSF Form 292 (12-00), will be sent with starting materials. In order to be processed, requests for advances must be accompanied by Form SF-3881, which is described in the above paragraph. **If you receive an advance and do not subsequently begin tenure as planned, the amount of the advance must be returned to NSF immediately.**

d. Delayed or Lost Stipend Payment. If a stipend payment is not received on time, inquiry should be made at the Fellow's bank to see if the payment can be traced. If it is still missing after a week or so, the Fellow should write the Foundation via electronic mail or at the address given on page one of this booklet requesting that the payment be stopped and that a replacement be processed. The Foundation will forward the appropriate fiscal information to the Treasury Department. In addition, an official of the bank should also write the Foundation stating that the bank did not receive the stipend payment. Such replacement payments usually require at least two months for processing. If the stipend is paid in the meantime, the Foundation should be notified immediately.

7. OTHER ALLOWANCES

a. Special Allowance. As soon as possible after the Foundation receives the Starting Certificate, each Fellow will be sent a first annual payment representing a Special Allowance of \$10,000; this allowance will also be paid electronically. This sum is intended to aid in defraying costs of general research expenses, special equipment, computing, travel, such as short-term visits to other institutions or observatories or attendance at scientific meetings, or publication costs during the first year of the fellowship tenure. It is expendable at the Fellow's discretion.

At the beginning of each subsequent year of the Fellowship, subject to the submission and approval of annual progress reports, and according to the schedule of payments submitted and approved by the Foundation, the Fellow will receive an additional \$10,000 annual research allowance. This, too, is expendable at the discretion of the Fellow.

b. Institutional Allowance. On behalf of each Fellow, the National Science Foundation will provide the Fellowship Institution with an allowance of \$7,000 for each year of the Fellowship, for partial reimbursement for expenses incurred in support of the research (such as employee health benefits, space, supplies, equipment, secretarial assistance, etc.). Fellowship Institutions must request their payments using NSF Form 220 (2-97), Request by Host Institution for an Institutional Allowance. The payments to the Fellowship Institutions will be awarded on an annual basis and

must be requested annually. NSF considers it appropriate for the Institutions to make available employee health benefits, and that the institutional allowance may be utilized for this purpose.

The Foundation is not responsible for any charges incurred by or in behalf of the Fellow by the institution.

8. ANNUAL PROJECT REPORTS

Fellows are required to submit annual project reports at least 90 days before the anniversary date of the award. For example, if an award is made with a starting date of 1 June 2001, annual project reports are due no later than 1 March 2002, and 1 March 2003. Continued funding for the second and third years of the Fellowship will be contingent on the approval of annual project reports, and it is the Fellow's responsibility to ensure that annual reports are submitted in a timely fashion so that stipend payments are not interrupted. Annual reports are submitted electronically through FastLane at <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>.

The Foundation would be pleased to receive an account of the Fellow's progress at any time, especially if there are particularly significant developments during a given Fellowship year.

9. CHANGE OF ADDRESS

A change in postal and/or electronic mail address should be reported promptly to the Foundation via electronic mail or in writing at the address on the first page of this booklet.

10. FOREIGN TRAVEL

All travel to be reimbursed from Federal funds must be by U.S. flag carriers if such service is available. Details are given below. No exceptions can be made to these regulations.

A. Use of U.S.-Flag Air Carriers

(1) The Comptroller General of the United States, by Decision B-138942 of June 17, 1975, as amended March 31, 1981, provided guidelines for implementation of Section 5 of the International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act of 1974 (49 U.S.C. 1517).

(2) Any air transportation to, from, between, or within a country other than the United States of persons or property, the expense of which will be assisted by NSF funding, must be performed by a U.S.-flag carrier if service provided by such a carrier is available.

(3) For the purposes of this requirement, U.S.-flag carrier service is considered available even though:

(a) comparable or a different kind of service can be provided at less cost by a foreign-flag air carrier;

(b) foreign-flag air carrier service is preferred by, or is more convenient for the Foundation or traveler; or

(c) service by a foreign-flag air carrier can be paid for in excess foreign currency.

(4) The following rules apply unless their application would result in the first or last leg of travel from or to the United States being performed by a foreign-flag air carrier:

(a) A U.S.-flag air carrier shall be used to destination or, in the absence of direct or through service, to the farthest interchange point on a usually traveled route.

(b) If a U.S.-flag air carrier does not serve an origin or interchange point, a foreign-flag air carrier shall be used only to the nearest interchange point on a usually traveled route to connect with U.S.-flag air carrier.

(c) If a U.S.-flag air carrier involuntarily reroutes the traveler via a foreign-flag air carrier, the foreign-flag air carrier may be used notwithstanding the availability of alternative U.S.-flag air carrier service.

B. Use of Foreign-Flag Air Carriers

(1) Travel To and From the United States. Use of a foreign-flag air carrier is permissible if:

(a) the airport abroad is the traveler's origin or destination airport, and use of U.S.-flag air carrier service would extend the time in a travel status by at least 24 hours more than travel by a foreign-flag air carrier; or

(b) the airport abroad is an interchange point, and use of U.S.-flag air carrier service would require the traveler to wait 6 hours or more to make connections at that point, or would extend the time in a travel status by at least 6 hours more than travel by a foreign-flag air carrier.

(2) Travel Between Points Outside the United States. Use of a foreign-flag air carrier is permissible if:

(a) travel by a foreign-flag air carrier would eliminate two or more aircraft changes enroute;

(b) travel by a U.S.-flag air carrier would extend the time in a travel status by at least 6 hours more than travel by a foreign-flag air carrier; or

(c) the travel is not part of the trip to or from the United States, and use of a U.S.-flag air carrier would extend the time in a travel status by at least 6 hours more than travel by a foreign-flag air carrier.

(3) Short Distance Travel. For all short distance travel, regardless of origin and destination, use of a foreign-flag air carrier is permissible if the elapsed travel time on a scheduled flight from origin to destination airport by a foreign-flag air carrier is 3 hours or less and service by a U.S.-flag air carrier would double the travel time.

11. ADDITIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROVISIONS

a. **Length of Tenure.** These Postdoctoral Fellowships are awarded for periods of 3 years, subject to satisfactory progress on the research and educational programs proposed. The tenure of a Fellowship may be interrupted only with the approval of the Foundation. In general, approval will not be given for support for portions of calendar-year intervals of durations less than three full-time months. **The total elapsed time of the Fellowship must not exceed 48 months.**

The Fellowship is subject to termination if the Fellow discontinues his/her research and educational activities for any reason prior to the end of Fellowship tenure. If a Fellow does not conform to the administrative requirements of the Fellowship Institution, the Foundation reserves the right to withhold all stipend payments, pending a full explanation.

b. **Extension of Tenure.** Requests for extensions of tenure will not be granted.

c. **Supplementary Activities.** During the tenure of the Fellowship the Fellows are expected to devote full time to the program of scientific research and educational activities outlined in their proposal, for which the award was granted. A Fellow may not engage in activities for compensation (except for brief military obligations) or receive another Fellowship or similar award while pursuing Fellowship activities without **prior** approval of the Foundation. Such approval may be granted only under exceptional circumstances.

d. **Federal and/or Armed Forces Employees.** If, during any part of a Fellowship tenure a Fellow will be a member of the Armed Forces or on leave from a position in the Federal Service, a statement must be filed from a cognizant official of the Government organization involved specifying (1) the funds, if any, that will be made available to the Fellow during tenure and the purpose for which they will be provided, and (2) the funds, if any, that will be made available to the Fellowship Institution on the Fellow's behalf. The Foundation and the Fellow's organization must reach a mutually satisfactory agreement regarding the Fellow's support during tenure before any funds can be provided under the Fellowship.

e. **Vacations.** NSF Fellowships do not provide a vacation period, as such, during the Fellowship tenure. Fellows are entitled to the short holiday periods observed by their Fellowship Institutions, such as Thanksgiving and winter and spring holidays. These holiday periods cannot be accumulated for use at a later date as a vacation period. There is considerable variation in institutional practices in this area, but if an institution should "close" for a period in excess of 2 weeks, each Fellow attending such an institution will be expected to have made prior arrangements for the use of necessary facilities to carry out the approved program. If it is not possible for the Fellow to make these arrangements at the Fellowship Institution, other satisfactory arrangements must be made with

prior Foundation approval, to carry on the work, or request the Foundation to permit suspension of the Fellowship for that period of time.

f. Medical Insurance. No medical or hospitalization program for use in the event of illness or accident involving a Fellow (or dependents) during tenure is provided by the National Science Foundation. A Fellow, in whose behalf the Foundation has made available to the Fellowship Institution an institutional allowance, may have medical or hospital fees paid from this fund.

In the absence of medical and hospital insurance by the institution, it is recommended the Fellows continue during tenure any medical insurance programs with which they are affiliated, or if they are not members of any such program, make arrangements to join a medical program which gives a reasonable amount of protection.

g. National Security and Inventions. Fellows are obliged to report promptly to the Foundation, prior to disclosure to others, any discoveries that are made or data that are developed which could reasonably be considered as likely to affect the national security or the national defense. Doubtful cases should be referred to the Foundation prior to the disclosure to others of any information concerning them.

Whenever any invention that is, or may be, patentable is conceived or first actually reduced to practice in the course of or under this grant, the grantee shall furnish the Foundation with complete information thereon; and the Foundation shall have the right to determine the disposition of the invention and title to and rights under any patent application or patent that may result. In making such a determination, the Foundation shall take into account the public interest and the equities of the grantee. In any case, the Foundation may arrange to have the invention described in a printed publication.

The grantee agrees that all documentation will be executed and all other actions necessary or proper to carry out the determination of the Foundation will be taken.

Expected as otherwise authorized in writing by the Grants Officer, the grantee shall insert in each subcontract having experimental, developmental, or research work as one of its purposes, provided making this article applicable to the subcontractor and its employees.

Reports of inventions required under these provisions or requests for retention of rights in such inventions, as well as requests for guidance in these matters, should be addressed to the NSF Office of the General Counsel.

h. Publication. Fellows may make the results of their research available to the public without restrictions, except as is required in the interest of national security. Please submit to the address given on page 1, one copy of any published reports resulting from work while on tenure.

The Government reserves a non-exclusive license to use and reproduce for governmental purposes, without payment, any publishable matter, including copyrighted matter, arising out of a Fellow's activities.

i. Income Taxes. No income tax will be withheld from any stipend. Provision therefore must be made by the Fellow for payment of any tax, domestic or foreign, when due. Final authority as to the taxability of awards rests with the Internal Revenue Service and the courts. Specific questions should be referred to the Internal Revenue Service.

Fellows are not in any sense employees of the National Science Foundation. Therefore, no funds will be deducted from the stipends; no Social Security taxes will be paid by the Foundation; no W-2 forms will be issued; and provision must be made by the Fellow for the filing of any necessary estimate of taxes due and for payment of all income taxes which may become due. A statement of funds received (including special allowance) will be issued by the Division of Financial Management of the Foundation upon written request of the Fellow.

The Foundation is unable to supply information concerning the income tax or other tax provisions of any foreign country. Inquiries should be directed to the authorities in the appropriate countries.

j. Future Employment. The award and acceptance of a Postdoctoral Fellowship does not obligate a Fellow, the National Science Foundation, or the United States Government with regard to future employment or future service of any kind.

k. Military Status. Brief interruption of a Fellowship for duly authorized military service or training will be permitted with prior Foundation approval. Requests for such interruptions of tenure should be directed to the Foundation in writing as soon as plans are final. Interruptions of less than 4 days need no approval.

In the case of a longer interruption resulting from active military service or from certain activities in lieu of service with the regular U.S. Armed Forces, provision can be made for reservations of a Fellowship (or the balance of it), and reinstatement of the unused portion at a later date. In such cases Fellows should notify the Foundation immediately in writing of their plans, and request further instructions.

l. Veterans' Benefits. As a result of the enactment of P.L. 91-219, effective March 26, 1970, educational benefits payments from the Veterans Administration may now be received concurrently with and supplementary to Fellowship payments from the National Science Foundation.

m. Special Considerations. A number of situations frequently encountered in the conduct of research require special information and supporting documentation before starting tenure. Among these are the following, some mandated by Federal law.

1. research which has an actual and/or potential impact on the environment;
2. research at a registered historic or cultural property;
3. research involving the use of in vitro generated recombinant DNA molecules;

4. research involving the use of human subjects, hazardous materials, warm-blooded animals, or endangered species.

Fellows must provide information on the status of any special permissions, clearances or provision related to the above items before beginning tenure. Assessment of environmental impact will be required when appropriate. Specific guidance on the need for such additional documentation may be obtained from the Fellowship Institution's Research Administration Office or the NSF Grant Policy Manual.

12. TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP

A Termination Certificate, NSF Form 453 (8-95), will be included in the materials sent with the award letter. This certificate must be signed by an appropriate official at the Fellowship Institution, and should show the date the Fellow actually completed Fellowship activities; the Fellowship will be considered to have terminated as of that date. When a Fellow affiliates with more than one institution, a Termination Certificate is required from each institution. Submission of this certificate is necessary to comply with governmental accounting procedures. In the event the certificate is not submitted the Fellow may be requested to return to the Foundation all Fellowship funds which were received during Fellowship tenure. Should this form be misplaced during the tenure of the Fellowship, Fellows are responsible for requesting a new form in ample time to have it signed prior to departure from the Fellowship Institution, and for making arrangements for its submission to the Foundation.

13. ASSOCIATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

The following documents will be mailed with the award letter, and are referred to in this document. These forms should be mailed to NSF at the address given at the beginning of this document, at the appropriate time in the tenure of the Fellowship, as described above.

Certification of PhD receipt

Fellowship Starting Certificate, NSF Form 349 (2-97)

ACH Vendor Enrollment, Form SF-3881

Request for Stipend Advance, NSF Form 292 (12-00)

Fellowship Payment Schedule, NSF Form 1367 (3-98)

Request by Host Institution for an Institutional Allowance, NSF Form 220-A (2-97)

Fellowship Action Form, NSF Form 383 (2-97)

Fellowship Termination Certificate, NSF Form 453 (8-95)